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REALITY, RESPONSIBILITY AND RESPECT IN THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN FROM FAMILIES WHO FOLLOW THE CROPS.

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THE INTERRELATEDNESS OF THE EDUCATION, NUTRITION, HEALTH, CLOTHING, SOCIAL CUSTOMS, AND HOUSING PROBLEMS OF THE MIGRANT CHILD ARE DISCUSSED WITH THE POINT BEING TO SHOW THEIR IMPORTANCE AND THE EFFECT OF THEIR LACK ON A CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT. FURTHER DISCUSSION TAKES UP THE EFFECT OF THESE FACTORS UPON THE CHILD'S PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT AND HIS ADJUSTMENT TO A DIFFERENT CULTURAL SETTING. THE INFLUENCE OF THE MIGRANT CHILD'S LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF SCIENCE, MATHEMATICS, READING, WRITING, SPEAKING, AND THE ARTS, UPON HIS ENVIRONMENT MUST ALSO BE CONSIDERED. THE PAPER CONCLUDES WITH A DISCUSSION OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO THESE MIGRANT WORKERS, UPON WHOM THEY DEPEND SO MUCH. CHILD CARE CENTERS, ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION, SUMMER SCHOOLS, PRE-SCHOOLS, AND BETTER HOUSING MUST BE PROVIDED. AN EFFORT SHOULD ALSO BE MADE TOWARD PARENT-TEACHER COOPERATION TO FOSTER BETTER RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE MIGRANTS AND THE COMMUNITY. THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED AT THE FOURTH ANNUAL STATEWIDE CONFERENCE ON FAMILIES WHO FOLLOW THE CROPS, SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA, FEBRUARY 1964. (CL)

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REALITY, RESPONSIBILITY AND RESPECT

IN THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

FROM FAMILIES WHO FOLLOW THE CROPS

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REALITY, RESPONSIBILITY AND RESPECT IN THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN FROM FAMILIES WHO FOLLOW THE CROPS

Helen Heffernan

The theme of this Fourth Annual Statewide Conference on Families Who Follow the Crops has been announced by Mrs. Hubert Wyckoff, Chairman representing the Governor's Advisory Committee on Children and Youth. The theme "Reality, Responsibility, and Respect: The 3 R's of the Farm Community" is a challenging one for farm workers, growers and agency personnel. An examination of the program indicates that six different groups will consider this theme: persons interested primarily in community development, education, employer-employee relations, health, housing, and welfare.

At first glance this seems to be a logical organization of the various facets of society's responsibility to families who follow the crops. No one could quarrel with the logic of these categories selected for consideration. But psychologically and ethically they are so interrelated that no one can work intelligently on any aspect of human need without being knowledgeable about all aspects of human need. Each of the areas selected for special focus is inextricably related to every other area.

School people have learned long ago that you cannot teach hungry children and hungry children come from families whose income is insufficient to provide proper nutrition. School people know that the individual human being is a unitary organism; if his body is suffering from illness or disease, if his teeth are in need of dental care, if his sight or hearing are impaired, his ability to learn is also seriously impaired, We cannot really consider the child's education without first considering his physical condition and health.

Dr. James B. Macdonald[1], Professor of Education, University of Wisconsin writing on the image of man, the learner himself, says that full opportunity for a human being to develop his potential depends on certain a priori conditions:

> A priori conditions are genetic and physical in character. An individual must possess an adequate genetic structure . . . must experience normal growth, and must have proper nutritional care throughout. The lack of any or all of these conditions will result in the thwarting of development. These conditions are . . . necessary before human potential may develop.

As Dr. Macdonald points out[2], the pre-natal condition and care of the mother is of equal significance in the child's development as his post-natal nurture. We need to give much more attention to what is needed if we are to have fine human beings.

Every teacher knows that a child who feels self-conscious about either the quality or cleanliness of his clothing as compared with other children cannot give his full attention to learning to read, to the understanding of mathematics, or to any other part of the educational program. One of the elementary school child's important developmental tasks is that of establishing good relationships with his age mates.

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[1] James B. Macdonald. "Chapter 2, An Image of Man: The Learner Himself" in Individualizing Instruction. The ASCD 1964 Yearbook. Washington: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, National Education Association, 1964 p. 33.

[2] See also: Harley Shands, Thinking and Psychotherapy. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961.

Children whose clothing, grooming and use of language is similar to that of the culture in which the majority of the children was reared are likely to meet with acceptance, understanding, recognition and love by their peers or age mates. It is unfortunately true, that children who differ greatly from the social customs and mores are more likely to become the objects of rejection, hostility and aggression. So again, conditions which we as adults may consider superficial and insignificant loom large with children and may actually create an antagonistic climate in which the "different" child finds it difficult to achieve.

With the facilities that many families who follow the crops have available, teachers comment on the great amount of human effort mothers expend to send children to school clean, hair neat, and with good attitudes toward school, the teacher and the other children. The child's task is by no means an easy one, he has grown up in a culture in which he has been taught how to act, how to talk, how to value himself, how to adjust to his surroundings. He may find himself in a new social environment in which his language is unacceptable, and in which his behavior does not conform. He has the difficult task of maintaining his personal integration and still remain open to different experiences. Education, again is closely related to community and family mores and welfare services.

Many wise and sympathetic teachers are hesitant about giving homework assignments or even recommending out-of-school reading of library books when they know that the housing available to families who move with the crops affords no quiet or privacy, is poorly lighted, crowded and lacks minimum comforts conducive to study. Teachers know that such homework will only add to the child's feelings of fear, frustration and inadequacy as he comes to school day after day with unfinished tasks and compares himself unfavorably with boys and girls from homes where assignments can be finished in good shape. Unfortunately this disadvantaged ..

child is too immature to recognize these unequal conditions. He usually blames himself. His anxiety increases. His school experiences result in him thinking less well of himself. He develops a poor image of himself. He comes to think of himself as a person who fails again and again to measure up to his teachers' expectancies. And so housing is closely related to education.

Schools know that the community in which the family lives has great influence upon him. The late Dr. Howard Lane of San Francisco State College, and an expert in the field of juvenile delinquency once said: "Good communities, good families and good schools do not produce bad children."

We know that education is our nation's number one capital investment. It is the way we build for the future. But if our country and our state are to secure proper returns on our investment, we must create the conditions in our communities, we must provide protection from dire poverty, we must safeguard health, we must be generous in providing welfare, we must assure workers decent housing and we must extend to this group of workers the protection and safeguards assured other workers. If we are genuinely concerned with reality we cannot view the problems of families who follow the crops in bits and pieces, we must be willing to seek all the facts and act courageously in terms of them.

What kind of education do we want for children whose families follow the crops?

We want the very best we can devise for any children in our country. We recognize the effect the quality of education has on the personality of children. I have no doubt that children of families who follow the crops will be able to learn

1. What they need to know about health
2. What they need to know about their social world

3. What they need to know about their scientific world

4. What they need to know about mathematics

5. What they need to know about speaking, reading and writing the English language

6. What they need to know about music, art, drama, literature, the dance.

All children want to learn. All children want to make themselves a part of their world. Every human being has inner drives to personal achievement.

My only concern is related to <u>how</u> these learnings are presented. And this leads us to the word "respect" in our theme. Someone whose knowledge of children was very great and whose modesty was so great that he did not sign this quotation which appears from time to time in the public and professional press under the caption "The Child Lives What He Learns". But perhaps we are on psychologically sounder ground if we said "The Child Learns What He Lives" and I think that is what the writer really meant when he said:

If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn.
If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight.
If a child lives with fear, he learns to be apprehensive.
If a child lives with pity, he learns to be sorry for himself.
If a child lives with jealousy, he learns to feel guilty.
If a child lives with encouragement, he learns to be confident.
If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient.
If a child lives with praise, he learns to be appreciative.
If a child lives with acceptance, he learns to love.
If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself.
If a child lives with recognition, he learns to have a goal.
If a child lives with fairness, he learns what justice is.

If a child lives with honesty, he learns what truth is.

If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith in himself.

If a child lives with friendliness, he learns that a world is a nice place in which to live.

More important than any specific subject matter learning are these learnings that build a personality. Robert Oppenheimer is credited with saying that knowledge doubles every ten years. He should know because he has been a great contributor to the acceleration of the discovery of new knowledge.

At a time when many people want to load the curriculum with facts and more facts, we do well to pause and ask if this is the knowledge likely to be of greatest value in the future. Perhaps we need to help our children "learn how to learn" so they can acquire the new knowledge significant to them now and in their adult years.

Let us turn now to our final word in the "reality, respect, responsibility" trimvirate. Let us think of "responsibility". Here is the place where the adults must have vision for according to the Proverbs, "where there is no vision, the people perish". But we must have more than vision, we must have vision coupled with action.

<u>The Elimination of Poverty</u>

Of top priority, and, therefore, I truly mean first, we must come to grips with the problem of poverty. President Lyndon B. Johnson has declared his belief that the United States can come to grips with the degrading problem of poverty in our society and achieve a victory.

What are the facts in relation to this problem of poverty? The United States has suddenly awakened to the needs of "our invisible poor". In 1958, Professor J. K. Galbraith published a book under the title: "The Affluent Society". Both his title and his content were in serious error. He stated that poverty in this country was no longer "a massive affliction". The interesting thing about his

statement aside from the fact that it is inaccurate, is that it was generally accepted.

Professor Galbraith did accept the fact that there are two kinds of poverty--"insular poverty" such as that suffered by people who live in the rural south and "case poverty" which he says is commonly and properly related to . . . the characteristics of the individuals so afflicted . . . such as mental deficiency, bad health, inability to adapt to the discipline of modern economic life, excessive procreation, alcohol, insufficient education". Professor Galbraith made no effort to differentiate between cause and effect. Does the individual suffer dire poverty because of his craving for alcohol, or does he seek surcease and escape from poverty in alcohol? And so with many of the other characteristics. Perhaps insufficient education is the result of dire poverty rather than its cause. The young adolescent from the migrant family who attempts to secure a high school education finds that he may be rejected by school authorities and age mates, he feels uncomfortable and unwanted, he feels friendless, and unable to meet the school's standards in language and behavior. He is fearful of massive reprisals with which he may be frequently threatened. He drops out of school and faces a bleak future aptly titled by the National Education Association in a recent publication: "No Room at the Bottom".

However, Professor Galbraith does not now stand unchallenged with regard to this problem of poverty. Michael Harrington in a new book (1963) The Other America: Poverty in the United States (Macmillan) presents the case of what it means to be poor in this country. But if you are looking for a dry statistical treatment of the facts (and in all justice, we must!) we can turn to two studies--one by the Department of Commerce (1962) and another published by the Conference on Economic Progress in Washington and authored by Thurman Arnold, Leon H. Keyserling, and Walter P. Reuther. Many other studies confirm these.

Mr. Harrington accepts the dividing line proposed by the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics of $4,000 yearly income for a family of four and $2,000 for an individual living alone. Below these incomes the individual is denied the minimum levels of health, housing, food, and education. Between 40 and 50 million Americans or about one-fourth of our population live in real poverty.

You may raise the question: Is there any alternative? And the answer has been given by President Johnson that there is. The United States with seven percent of the world's population has 55 percent of the world's wealth. We can banish poverty if we wish and with it a Pandora's box of other evils can be greatly reduced: crime, disease, ignorance, and human misery.

If we are going to come to grips with poverty as it manifests itself most disastrously in the families who follow the crops we must provide a minimum wage, social security, unemployment insurance and all the other safeguards available to the general population.

Last week (Sacramento Bee February 21) reported:

> The state senate fact finding committee on labor and welfare concluded its series of hearings on farm labor housing.
>
> The committee already has decided to introduce a constitutional amendment to provide for a $50 to $100 million bond issue to provide for public housing. If approved by the legislature it will be placed on the November ballot for a vote by the people.
>
> The senators heard testimony from among 17 witnesses that availability of domestic workers for harvesting is directly related to the availability of quality family housing.
>
> The testimony brought out that a sense of urgency has been given the farm labor housing problem by the probable termination

of the Mexican bracero program after this year, and the need for attracting more domestic workers to farm jobs.

Walter Simcich, research economist for the California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, said a solution to poor family housing would be to raise wages so as to increase the worker's ability to buy or rent good shelter. He lashed out at circumstances of the farm workers and their families.

"We can take roughly the same degree of pride over the living conditions of California's agricultural workers as Governor (George) Wallace is entitled to over the state of civil rights in Alabama," said Simcich.

"The economic and social circumstances of the farm workers and his family remain as much a state and national disgrace as ever and in no area is this more true than with regard to their housing conditions."

Education is currently profoundly concerned with population movement and growth which has added a new and difficult dimension to an already difficult problem--the increase in pupil population from families in which a language other than English is spoken. During the past ten years California's Spanish-speaking population has increased 88 percent.[1]

California was well on its way to the solution of its problem of Spanish-speaking children. In a matter of three decades many second generation Mexican-Americans had found education the royal road to social mobility and were employed in teaching, medicine, law and a wide variety of technical and semi-skilled occupations. These were the people who were able to become proficient in a second

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[1]Based on a report by Julian Samora, The Education of the Spanish-speaking in the Southwest. January 18, 1963.

language but at the same time kept their proficiency in their mother tongue.

The infiltration of thousands of families from the lower socioeconomic levels of Mexico, means that the teaching of English as a second language becomes a problem requiring the attention of highly specialized teachers at a time when teacher shortage continues acute and when the California Legislature takes an unrealistic view of the needs of a school system that serves 4,600,000 children and youth and which increased in the past year by more than a quarter of a million pupils.

But critical as the problems facing education may be, certain districts encouraged by local socially-minded leaders have moved ahead to make special provisions. In northern California, a summer program has been carried on during the past three years that points up certain significant possibilities:

1. a child care center serves the three- and four-year-old children of mothers employed in the crops
2. a summer school is provided for school age children

During the summer of 1963, the regional state college used the farm labor project as a center for observation and participation for prospective teachers. In addition to staffing the summer school, the college students provided classes in typing, stenography and electronics in the evening as well as a class for Spanish-speaking adults in conversational English. The college students staffed the library, library cards were issued, circulation increased greatly. Young children who were having difficulty with reading were helped in the library.

Although it would be difficult to provide the devoted service of enthusiastic college students directed by two equally enthusiastic young college professors, the possibility of establishing child care centers is entirely feasible. Many school districts now provide summer schools for elementary school children and any school

district may do so. We are currently bringing to the attention of school districts in which children reside whose families are employed in the crops, their responsibility to make additional educational opportunity available to compensate for loss of time as families move about the State.

Some districts are providing places for study and recreation for children during the late afternoon and early evening. Volunteers are recruited to assist them with out-of-school assignments.

Several programs currently in operation should be extended to these children. The compensatory education act should be adequately financed and put to use where the need is so great. The program of special classes in English for foreign-born minors now being carried on in Imperial and San Diego Counties should be extended throughout the State for those who find regular school work difficult because of a language handicap.

The first year of school--the kindergarten--for children four years nine months of age is an important beginning for all children. The kindergarten day should be lengthened to 240 minutes and include a nourishing mid-day meal and a restful period of complete relaxation.

California will not meet the needs of its burgeoning population without greater financial support. Federal aid for education and greater equalization of the support of education will produce funds to meet the individual needs of our disadvantaged children.

Finally, we must find ways and means for fathers and mothers and teachers to work together in meeting the needs of children. The family is the most influential group in the child's life, the school comes second, and his companions come a close third. Understanding and cooperation are needed if good mothers and fathers and good teachers are to achieve the best for all our children.